



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DHS GEARS UP INSPECTIONS AS THE WEATHER HEATS UP** *TEMPERATURES SOAR IN CLOSED VEHICLES, INCREASING RISKS TO CHILDREN*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Tennessee Department of Human Services child care licensing division is kicking off its annual crackdown on providers that transport pre-school children. Hundreds of unannounced inspections will be performed statewide this summer to ensure child care agencies follow DHS licensing rules and keep children safe as the temperature rises.

Children can suffer sunburn and dehydration after only a few moments inside a closed vehicle during hot, summer weather. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle climb quickly, rising to more than 107 degrees within minutes. Children exposed to such extreme heat can suffer heatstroke, brain damage and death.

“Most providers across the state are working hard and should be commended for keeping children in their care safe. We conduct this annual crack-down to correct problems and prevent tragedies,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “Every adult must be vigilant to protect children from the dangerous summer heat. A moment of carelessness can have devastating consequences.”

The risk of severe injury and even death, however, is not limited to children transported by child-care providers. Extreme heat poses a serious danger to all children. Nationwide last year, at least 29 children died when they were left in hot cars, trucks and SUVs—two of these deaths occurred in Tennessee. So far this year, three children have died in hot cars, including a 15-month old boy who was trapped in his father’s car earlier this month in Chattanooga. Four children died in hot daycare vans in Memphis between 1997 and 2003.

The Department of Human Services licenses 3,500 child care agencies across the state, and 22 percent of these offer transportation. The majority of transporting agencies are found in Memphis, with 278 providers offering the service. Knoxville has the second highest concentration, with 71 providers transporting, followed by Nashville (65) and Chattanooga (22).

Last year, seventy-six providers were “put on notice” due to serious violations. Four agencies voluntarily suspended their licenses to transport and one agency was put on probation for having no transportation logs at all. Keeping accurate logs helps ensure that providers know exactly where all the children are at all times and that no children are left on the van or bus.

If you witness transportation or other child-care violations, please call the Child Care Complaint Hotline at 1-800-462-8261. This number is posted on every licensed child care vehicle.

For more information on child care licensing, visit: [http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc\\_main.htm](http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm). If you see a child left unattended in any closed vehicle, please call your local police department for emergency assistance.

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